

Kosmas Helps Pass Legislation to Modernize Central Florida Schools, Create New Jobs

Bill Includes Kosmas' Amendment to Set Aside Funds for Schools Hit Hard by Recession and Natural Disasters

(Washington, DC) - Today, Congresswoman Suzanne Kosmas (FL-24) voted to pass legislation to provide funding to Central Florida schools for modernization, renovation and repair projects, as well as to encourage energy efficiency and the use of renewable resources in schools. Florida would receive over \$278 million to improve schools and turn them into "green buildings" through the 21st Century Green High-Performing Public Schools Facilities Act (H.R. 2187), which passed the House 275-155. The Green Schools Act includes an estimated \$5.6 million for Brevard County schools, \$17.6 million for Orange County, \$3.7 million for Seminole County, and \$8.6 million for Volusia.

Modernizing schools and making them more energy efficient is an effective way to lower costs and save taxpayer dollars. A green school typically utilizes about 30 percent less energy and 30 percent less water, saving thousands of dollars per year.

"This bill provides critical funds to modernize our schools and turn them into 'green buildings,' which will help our environment while creating jobs in the process," said Congresswoman Kosmas. "The funding will help ensure that schools are able to make needed repairs, bring their buildings up to safety codes, and create healthier learning environments for Florida's children. In addition, these fiscally responsible investments will provide long-term benefits by saving taxpayers thousands of dollars per year in energy costs."

The legislation included an amendment offered by Congresswoman Kosmas, along with Reps. Bobby Bright (AL-2), Henry Cueller (TX-28) and Al Green (TX-9), that would set aside more than \$300 million for school districts in regions that are suffering from significant economic distress or are recovering from natural disasters.

"Central Florida has been hit hard by two devastating forces: the recession and natural disasters," said Kosmas. "As a result, our education system is experiencing a budget crisis that has only been temporarily relieved through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Many of our schools still do not have the money in their budgets to complete basic

repairs, and with hurricane season rapidly approaching, our schools remain at risk. Our amendment sets aside dedicated funds to help the schools that are struggling the most."

Following passage in the House, the 21st Century Green High-Performing Public Schools Facilities Act was sent to the Senate for consideration.

Click [HERE](#)
for a breakdown of funding by school district.

Additional information on the 21st Century Green High-Performing Public Schools Facilities Act:

Provides schools with access to funding for modernization, renovation and repair projects

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Authorizes \$6.4 billion for school facilities projects for fiscal year 2010, and ensures that school districts will quickly receive funds for school modernization, renovation, and repairs that create healthier, safer, and more energy-efficient teaching and learning climates.

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Allocates the same percentage of funds to school districts that they receive under Part A of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, except that it guarantees each such district a minimum of \$5,000.

Encourages energy efficiency and the use of renewable resources in schools

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Requires the majority of funds (100 percent by 2015) to be used for projects that meet green building standards.

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Allows states to reserve one percent of funds to administer the program and to develop a statewide database of school facilities, including their modernization and repair needs, energy use, carbon footprints, and an energy efficiency quality plan.

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Requires school districts to publicly report the educational, energy and environmental benefits of projects, how they comply

with the green building requirements, and the percentage of funds used for projects at low-income, rural and charter schools.

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Requires the Secretary of Education, in consultation with the Secretary of Energy and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, to disseminate best practices in school construction and to provide technical assistance to states and school districts regarding best practices.

Improves student achievement and increases teacher retention by providing more children and teachers with a modern, safe, clean and healthy place for learning

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Research demonstrates that better school facilities result in improved student achievement and teacher recruitment and retention.

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Building quality affects the context for learning - such that lighting, noise reduction, air quality and other factors affect student learning gains and behavior.

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The physical condition of schools affects teacher and principal recruitment and retention.

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Forty percent of teachers who transferred schools and thirty-nine percent who left teaching cited the need for significant school repairs as a source of their dissatisfaction.

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One-third of school principals cited at least one environmental factor as interfering with their ability to deliver instruction.

Boosts the economy by injecting demand into the marketplace, improving communities and generating jobs

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School quality has a direct, positive impact on residential property values and can improve a community's ability to attract businesses and workers.

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Investments in school facilities bring money into local economies through job creation and supply purchases and can help

revitalize distressed neighborhoods.

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Analyses of this legislation estimate that this bill would support 136,000 new jobs.

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